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PP RUEHDE RUEHDIR
DE RUEHDO #0639/01 2511058

ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 071058Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY DOHA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8197
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000639

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/07/2018

TAGS: PREL PGOV OA

SUBJECT: (C) CABINET RE-SHUFFLE A "MINEFIELD" BETWEEN POWER CENTERS, RAND SAYS

REF: A. DOHA 515

1B. DOHA 475(NOTAL)

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH E. LEBARON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

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(C) KEY POINTS

-- A struggle continues between the Prime Minister and Sheikha Mozah (the Amir's wife) over the composition of the Qatari Government after the July Cabinet re-shuffle, according to RAND Corporation.

-- The Prime Minister wants to concentrate power in ministries reporting to him; the Sheikha continues to advocate for supreme councils created by and answerable to her in the areas of health, education and family affairs.

-- RAND is advising both sides on a way forward, while ministries draw up re-structuring proposals for the Amir's approval.

(C) COMMENTS

-- RAND's analysis and comments from our other contacts suggest that there is a great deal of jockeying going on within the ruling family and inside ministries in advance of the next Amiri decree, expected sometime in October, which will define the structure of Cabinet ministries and their relationships to the supreme councils.

-- Qatar is a tiny country with massive resources and ambitions to match, so it is not surprising that there are disagreements among those at the top as to how best to achieve their goals. What is unusual in this instance is that the Amir has allowed a time lag between the Cabinet re-shuffle and his next decree, giving space for this jockeying between powerful factions to occur.

-- While local media have not commented on it directly, it is well known among the Qatari public that Sheikha Mozah chairs the supreme councils and that the PM heads the Council of Ministers, so how the roles and responsibilities of each are eventually defined will provide a clear signal from the Amir regarding which model of government he wants to take Qatar through the next several years.

RAND THE REFEREE

¶11. (C) Ambassador met on September 4 with RAND-Qatar Policy Institute Director Dr. Richard Darilek and heard his views on what he termed a "power argument" between Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani and the Amir's wife, Qatar Foundation Chairperson Sheikha Mozah al-Missnad. Darilek said he was now "more closely involved than I'd like to be" in the re-organization of the government after the Amir re-shuffled the Cabinet on July 1 (reftels). There is a "difference of view," he said, on the role of the independent supreme councils, chaired by Sheikha Mozah, that had financial resources and operational power in the areas of health, education and family affairs, and the ministries that now nominally handle those portfolios.

¶12. (C) Both sides, in Darilek's view, have strong arguments to back up their positions. The Prime Minister, who previously had no authority over supreme councils, wants to fold their functions into ministries and/or relegate them to only an advisory role so that he can exercise greater control over the direction of the government.

¶13. (C) Sheikha Mozah, on the other hand, sees ministries as "bureaucratically inert" and supreme councils as more nimble change agents for a rapidly developing country like Qatar. The National Health Authority, according to Darilek, was an excellent example, as it achieved much more progress in a short while than could a Ministry of Health.

¶14. (C) Darilek said that he was now trying to "find a way through the minefield" between Sheikha Mozah's vision and the

DOHA 00000639 002 OF 002

PM's "henchman" on government re-organization, Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Nasser. Darilek said he was surprised to hear Sheikha Mozah tell him in a September 3 briefing that she had been totally unaware of Nasser's mission to help finalize the re-structuring of the Cabinet ministries.

¶15. (C) According to Darilek, ministries have been tasked with formulating re-structuring plans that will be submitted to the Amir for his approval by the end of the month. These plans, he said, are as simple as defining "what responsibilities go into each box on the diagram" and a subsequent Amiri decree will then formalize the role of the ministries, the supreme councils, and their relationship to each other.

LeBaron